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thomas@nerite.com conchologistsofamerica.org

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CONCHOLOGISTS OF AMERICA, INC.

In 1972, a group of shell collectors saw the need for a national organization devoted to the interests of shell collectors; to the beauty of shells, to their scientific aspects, and to the collecting and preservation of mollusks. This was the start of COA. Our membership includes novices, advanced collectors, scientists, and shell dealers from around the world. In 1995, COA adopted a conservation resolution: Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 species of living mollusks, many of great economic, ecological, and cultural importance to humans and whereas habitat destruction and commercial fisheries have had serious effects on mollusk populations worldwide, and whereas modern conchology continues the tradition of amateur naturalists exploring and documenting the natural world, be it resolved that the Conchologists of America endorses responsible scientific collecting as a means of monitoring the status of mollusk species and populations and promoting informed decision making in regulatory processes intended to safeguard mollusks and their habitats.

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OFFICERS

President: Harry G. Lee
4132 Ortega Forest Dr.
Jacksonville, FL 32210-5813
shells@hglee.com

Vice President: Karlynn Morgan
3089 Shannon Drive
Winston Salem, NC 27106-3647
karlynnmorgan@earthlink.net

Treasurer: Steven Coker
202 Canyon Oak Dr.
Lake Jackson, TX 77566-4599
shellman7000@sbcglobal.net

Secretary: Amelia Ann Dick
378 Pagan Rd.
Smithfield, VA 23430-1520
amelia-ann@msn.com

Membership: Linda Powers
2700 N. Beach Rd. Unit D106
Englewood, FL 34223-9223
linda.powers1@gmail.com

Trustee: Everett Long
422 Shoreline Drive
Swansboro, NC 28584-7204
nlong3@earthlink.net

Editor: Thomas E. Eichhorst
4528 Quartz Dr. N.E.
Rio Rancho, NM 87124-4908
(505) 896-0904
thomas@nerite.com

Immediate Past President: José Leal
3075 Sanibel-Captiva Road
Sanibel, FL 33957-1580
jleal@shellmuseum.org

Endowments Director: Donald Dan
6704 Overlook Drive
Ft. Myers, FL 33919-6426
(239) 481-6704
donaldan@aol.com

Awards Director: Vicky Wall
303 Wall Rd.
Mayodan, NC 27027-8225
vwallsheller@gmail.com

Convention Coordinator: Anne Joffe
1163 Kittiwake Circle
Sanibel, FL 33957-3605
sanibelchiton@aol.com

Member at Large: Bruce Neville
2700 Sandy Circle
College Station, TX 77845-5309
b2neville@gmail.com

Member at Large: Tom Ball
8273 SW 44 Court
Davie, FL 33328-2995
tball@mindspring.com

Historian: Alan Gettleman
2225 Tanglewood Lane
Merritt Island, FL 32953-4287
(321)-536-2896
lychee@cfl.rr.com

Website Coordinators:
Karlynn Morgan (lead), Steven Coker, Tom Eichhorst, Harry G. Lee & Vicky Wall
[contacts above]

Academic Grants Chairwoman:
Jann Vendetti
Twila Bratcher Endowed Chair in Malacological Research
Nat. Hist. Museum of L.A. County
900 Exposition Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90007
jannvendetti@yahoo.com

Editor:
Tom Eichhorst
4528 Quartz Dr. N.E.
Rio Rancho, NM 87124-4908
(505) 896-0904
thomas@nerite.com

Advertising Manager:
Amelia Ann Dick
378 Pagan Road
Smithfield, VA 23430-1520
(757)-357-9686
amelia-ann@msn.com

EDITORIAL BOARD

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Front cover: *Turbinella angulata* ([Lightfoot], 1786), from Roatan, Honduras, in 10 feet of water, collected by Alan Burke on a sand bottom. This monster shell (340mm, world record size is 496mm!) is realistically represented on the side wall of the pre-Columbian Temple of Quetzalcoatal (or the Feathered Serpent) at Teotihuacan, Mexico (see article by Dr. Emily Vokes on p. 4).

Back cover: The very colorful nudibranch *Felimida binza* (Marcus & Marcus, 1963), laying eggs under the Blue Heron Bridge, Riviera Beach, FL. This photograph and the one shown below of the completed egg case, were taken by Brenda Hill. The images were originally forwarded for inclusion in *American Conchologist* by COA member Carole Marshall.

Last flight out

Hi Tom,

Plenty of time here to work on shells, which is a good thing, can't complain!

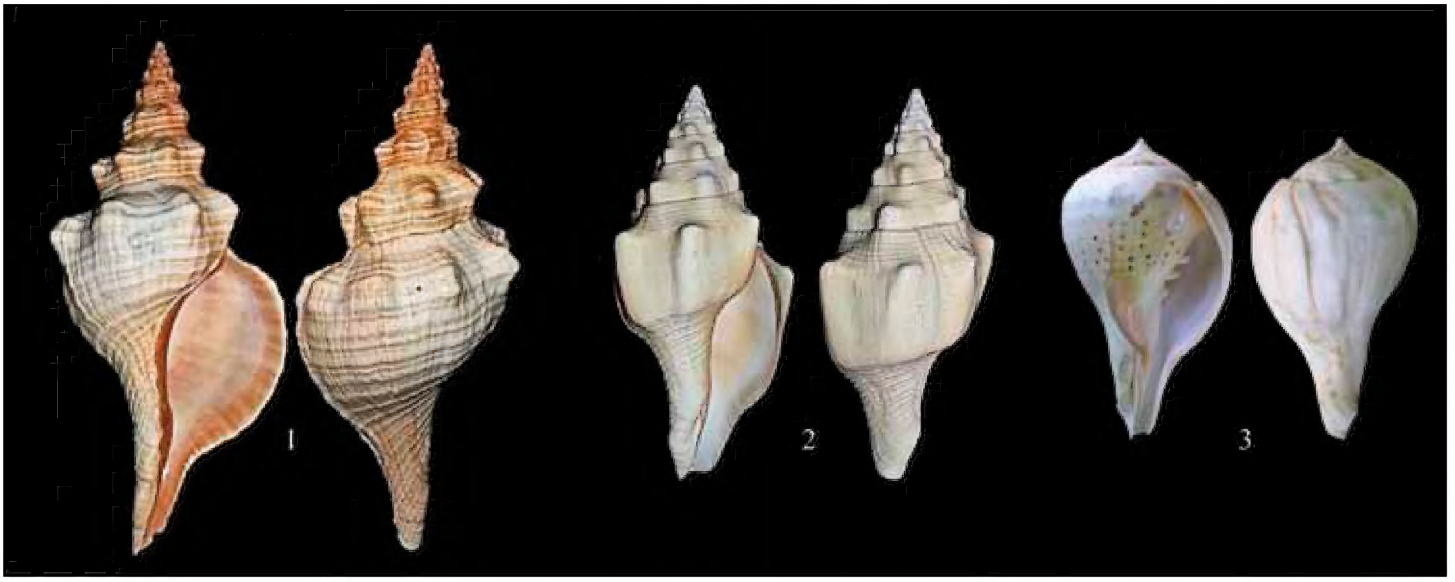
I've attached a photo of *Euprotomus bulla* (Roding, 1798) if needed and if it would work for the magazine. I collected it in Fiji on March 21, 2020. This was the last shell I collected before our group headed home the next day, which coincided with the United States issuing a Level 4 travel alert due to coronavirus. March 22nd was our scheduled day to leave and our flight ended up being the last Fiji Airways flight to the United States, before all flights were suspended. Needless to say, it was a surreal moment even before we all realized how serious the Pandemic would become.

We ran in to a young couple with a similar story. She was from the US, husband of a few months from Australia. I don't remember the paperwork story, but somehow it hadn't worked out yet for either of them to live in the other's country, so she was still living in the US, he in Australia. They planned to be together for a couple of weeks in Fiji, but were there only a few days before all the travel alerts and bans. He had to go back to Australia before the flights stopped. She was on our flight to LA. No panic or anything like that at the Nadi Airport, but just really quiet. No one knew what to think. LAX was quiet like our small airport here in Greensboro, and then Atlanta and Greensboro were deserted like our little one runway Shiloh Airport in nearby Eden. I'm glad we could get home.

Vicky Wall

The Sacred Chank

Emily H. Vokes



1. *Triplofusus giganteus* (Kiener, 1840) (originally *Fasciolaria gigantea*); 2. *Turbinella angulata* ([Lightfoot], 1786); *Turbinella pyrum* (Linnaeus, 1767). Images courtesy of Bill Frank, jaxshells.org.

Turbinella pyrum (Linnaeus, 1767) is a large, ponderous gastropod common in the waters off the Indian subcontinent where for thousands of years it has been venerated as the "Sacred Chank." I made the acquaintance of this iconic species back in 1963 when, still a graduate student, I identified the large gastropod shell prominently featured on the Temple of Quetzalcoatal (or the Feathered Serpent) at Teotihuacan, Mexico, as *Turbinella angulata* ([Lightfoot], 1786). Previously this shell image had been identified by archeologists as *Fasciolaria gigantea* Kiener, 1840 (now *Triplofusus giganteus*), another large gastropod found off the Gulf Coast of Mexico. When I mentioned this to Robert Wauchope, Director of Tulane University's Middle American Research Institute (MARI), he became quite excited and insisted I publish this information. At the time there was lot of controversy among the archaeological profession as to trans-Pacific influences on Mesoamerican culture. Many could not believe that the high level of culture seen in Mexico, Central America, and South America, could have been developed by such seemingly primitive people. At his urging, therefore, I published a short paper in *American Antiquity* on "A Possible Hindu Influence at Teotihuacan" (Vokes, 1963), noting the connection between the American *Turbinella* and the "sacred" Indian one. The idea of shells being used by the Aztecs, among many others, had been well documented by Jackson (1916); however, he did not identify the species, citing only "large, gastropod shells," which were mainly used as trumpets.

The Temple of Quetzalcoatal (or the Feathered Serpent) at Teotihuacan, Mexico. Image, Wikipedia commons.

A closer image of various depictions of deities and shells on the sides of the temple. Image, Wikipedia commons.

The *Turbinella angulata* on the sides of the temple between Tlaloc, the rain-god (left) and the feathered serpent head (right). Image, Wikipedia commons.

A closer image of the *Turbinella angulata* on the sides of the temple. Image, Wikipedia commons.

The shell of the Indian Ocean *Turbinella pyrum* seems almost designed for its role as the "Sacred Chank." The shell is more than usually thick for a large gastropod, and also unusually smooth in outline, generally lacking any sort of axial sculpture. The very heavy periostracum seems to protect the outer surface of the shell, so that it is not disfigured by marine borings or encrustations. As a result, the "snowy-white, porcelaneous nature" (Hornell, 1915, p. 4) of the shell is almost perfectly designed to serve as some sort of "divine instrument."

The history of the Sacred Chank in Hindu mythology has been well documented, most recently by Rose (1974). If one is interested in a complete study of the history, sacred impact, and general usage of the species, James Hornell (1914, 1915) has written extensively on the subject and is highly recommended. (Fortunately these works are readily available on that valued resource *Biodiversity Heritage Library*!). At the time he was the Superintendent of the Pearl and Chank Fisheries, Madras, India, and tells us more than we might really want to know about the production of chank shells in India back in the early 20th Century. He also published several studies on Indian Mollusca in general, some (1949a, 1949b, 1951) being published after his death in 1949, but in addition to molluscan studies, Hornell was a most interesting person. One should read his entry in Wikipedia for a full appreciation of this many-faceted writer. It is noted that after his retirement he became a world-class expert on primitive water-craft and string figures (e.g., cats-cradle).

Concentrating all of these various studies on the Sacred Chank, the basic information indicates that the shell has been sanctified for thousands of years. The original use was as a horn, coming from a custom of animists of employing noise to scare the monsters they feared. This custom conferred a religious significance and from this

Hindu priest blowing his 'conch horn' (*Turbinella pyrum*) during a puja in Tirupati, India. Image by Claude Renault, Wikipedia commons.

the shell itself became sacred (Hornell, 1915, p. 11). The Sanskrit word *Sankha*, is of Aryan origin and is related to the Greek, *Kongkhe*, or the Latin, *Concha*, all literally meaning "shell." Thus, it is believed that the "Aryans" (i.e., Indo-Iranian or Persians), who originally invaded India from the north, brought with them the idea of a large gastropod being used as a trumpet, especially in battle. When these Aryan-speaking hordes entered India, perhaps as much as 2,000 or more years B.C., they discovered a thriving shell and pearl industry along the coast. As they mixed with the native people along the coast of India they recognized the possibilities of the large white *Turbinella*, living in the near-shore waters. All the earliest references are only to shell trumpets. Among these is the famous conch of Krishna, a famous early king, who is considered by Hindus as having been reincarnated as Krishna, "the wise and sacred god of the

On the left is "the finest sinistral chank in existence" according to Hornell (1914, p. 130, pl. 15). Image from a copy of Hornell (1914) on the Biodiversity Heritage Library website.

Both a common dextral (right-handed) *T. pyrum* and a rare sinistral (left-handed, 1 in 600,000) *T. pyrum* as illustrated in an *American Conchologist* article by COA President Harry Lee (Lee, 2011). Both shells are in the collection of Harry Lee.

Yadavas" (Hornell, 1914, p. 120). The chank shell quickly became greatly sanctified and many exquisitely carved and decorated shell trumpets are found in Hindu and Buddhist temples.

Krishna's chank is always shown as a sinistral abnormality, "a rarity so choice and valuable as to be worthy to form an adornment of a god" (Hornell, 1914, p. 130). Beautiful examples are among those found in many Indian temples and one figured by Hornell is believed by him to be "the finest sinistral chank in existence" (Hornell, 1914, p. 130, pl. 15). Hornell's 1914 study is mainly about the use of the chank shell for bangles (more below), and only in pp. 117- 124 does he consider the religious aspects of the chank.

Although *Turbinella pyrum* is normally "dextral," rare examples occur that are "sinistral." According to Hornell, 300 years of Indian production yielded 120 examples out of a total production of 750 million shells, demonstrating the degree of rarity (Hornell, 1915, p. 22). As has been noted by every author discussing this, the left-handed examples are literally "worth their weight in gold." It should be mentioned here also that what English-speaking malacologists call "sinistral" is actually a right-handed shell, when one looks at the anatomy of a gastropod, the head being adjacent to the siphonal canal, which points in the direction of the animal's forward motion. As Hornell notes in a footnote the shell is "termed left-handed or sinistral by Europeans, whereas Indians term it right-handed. They view it from the mouth end, and we from the apex and accordingly confusion is frequent in conversation on the subject with Indians." (Hornell, 1914, p. 122). Actually the Indians are correct!

These left-handed chanks also intrigue shell enthusiasts, who desire them as much as the most devout Hindu. The recent literature includes the paper by Rose, mentioned above, which features a sinistral specimen now in the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, originally owned by the Duchess of Portland (Rose, 1974, fig. 2). The MCZ is extremely fortunate in having not only the Portland specimen, but a second example more recently acquired when they received the collections of a noted amateur, Joseph George Claud-Mantle, in 2011, as documented by Neiburger and Baldinger, who also refigure the Portland shell (2012, fig. 10). The third U.S. specimen is to be found in the collection of Dr. Harry Lee, who provided an account of the peregrinations of his specimen, which originally was in the Calvert collection, and which he promises will ultimately belong to the Florida Museum of Natural History (Lee, 2011, p. 28, figd.).

As fascinating as these expensive left-handed chanks are, the real monetary monster is in something little known to malacologists or even Americans in general. This is the mostly now-abandoned business of bangle bracelets. Because of the association with Krishna or Vishnu in general, the Indian chank became imbued with sanctity and there developed an entire industry devoted to producing decorative objects made from the beautiful Ivory-like

A pair of chank bangles, at one time a symbol of Hindu marital permanence, much like the gold wedding band in western culture. Image by T. Eichhorst.

shell. Again, Hornell published extensively on this subject, inasmuch as he was principally interested in the Indian fisheries industry. His first study (1913) was devoted solely to the bangle industry; subsequent papers (e.g., 1914, 1915), although they treat the religious aspects of the Sacred Chank, are actually devoted primarily to documenting the incredible monetary value of the chank industry and provide many illustrations of the artisans who create the chank bangles.

The shell of *Turbinella pyrum* seems almost divinely designed to provide material for a lady's bracelet. Not only is the thick shell material a dense, pure white porcelain consistency, but the normal size of the adult shell is such that a slice made at right-angles to the shell axis provides a circle exactly the right size for a female arm. At the time Hornell was writing, all Hindu women upon marriage were expected to wear a pair of chank bangles, much the way a Western woman would wear a wedding ring. The wearing of these bangles was considered a symbol of the permanence of the marriage, only discarding them when widowed. This symbol of marriage was already dying out in Hornell's time, but in the hundreds of years prior they had been an important feature not only in Indian culture but also in Bhutan, and especially Tibet (1915, p. 54). Hornell's 1915 study devotes extensive documentation to the use of bangle bracelets, especially in the marriage ceremony (1915, pp. 49-58) and an additional several pages to the archeological evidence indicating that the use of bangles dates back as much as 2000 years (1915, pp. 58-73). Today the shell bangle has largely been replaced by gold or other metal, glass, and regrettably plastic. Should one desire a genuine chank bangle, however, there are many available for sale online. Just Google "Indian shell bangles."

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Emily H. Vokes
165 S. Sixth St.
Ponchatoula. LA. 70454
emilyvokes@att.net

An ideal season for *Cepaea nemoralis* in my neighborhood (adapted from *The Dredgings* 60 (5) 2020: 6-7

George Holm

During the mandatory COVID-19 pandemic lock-down from March to May, I stayed around my house and only ventured out to give my dog Zoe her necessary daily walks. This past winter has been quite mild and it was followed by a spring and early summer that were very wet, and that made wanting to stay inside during lock-down so much more desirable for all. Cars were parked as neighbors worked from home and school children continued their education online. The neighborhood during our walks appeared to be virtually deserted.

Zoe's necessary need to go outside was welcomed by me, and it was during those times that I observed how many more *Cepaea nemoralis* (Linnaeus, 1758), there were this year compared to years past. The ground had not dried out even once from winter to summer, and it had made for the lushest vegetation I have seen since I moved here eleven years ago. Since *C. nemoralis* will bury into the ground when the soil begins too dry, the mild and wet weather had to have been the reason the snails were so plentiful.

I did occasionally see snails along the River Walk that borders my neighborhood on three sides with the Fraser River, but it was by an apartment building, one that has a long retaining wall with a hedge growing between it and the sidewalk, where snails were especially plentiful. What stood out, aside from how many snails there were, was the variety of shell colors and numbers of bands, or lack thereof, that was present among them. I was looking at a single colony along the wall but it was rare to see two snails that appeared to be alike.

C. nemoralis is an introduced species. They survive by scraping algae from hard surfaces using their radulae, thus the shaded retaining wall made for an ideal

habitat. They will also eat foliage and are considered a plant nuisance for gardens and in nurseries. Their many colors and designs have helped speed their spread into new yards or neighborhoods as they are tempting for people to pick up and take home. I have seen and heard of children in the neighborhood collecting snails after the lockdown. One small boy wanted to look at them in a terrarium and a girl wanted to watch them in her garden.

The photos in the article were taken this year during my walks with Zoe and show some of the many variations within the species.

George Holm
buster_2@shaw.ca

The land snail genus *Cepaea* is in the family Helicidae Rafinesque, 1815. Mollusks in this family are ground and bush-dwelling snails that originated in Europe and countries around the Mediterranean, but many species have been introduced to other areas of the world, such as North America and Australia. The very common brown garden snail *Cornu aspersum* (Müller, 1774) (syn. *Helix aspersa*) is a member of this family. There are four species in the genus *Cepaea* (above illustration from *American Conchologist* June 2008):

1. *Cepaea hortensis* (Müller, 1774), 2. *Cepaea nemoralis* (Linnaeus, 1758), 3. *Cepaea sylvatica* (Drapanaud, 1801), 4. *Cepaea vindobonensis* (Férussac, 1821).

Below: another look at *C. nemoralis* varieties. Image by Angus Davison on Wikipedia Creative Commons.

Shell dealer mail order lists: a bygone era - almost

Thomas Eichhorst

As a young landlocked New Mexico resident who collected shells, a mail order list from a shell dealer was a necessity in the 1960s, not to mention an exciting find in the mail box. My first such list was from The Collector's Cabinet in New York, NY, owner and operator: Jerome Eisenberg, author years later of "A Collector's Guide to Seashells of the World" (1981). Not surprising, his shell list was titled, "A Collector's Guide to Sea Shells." And yes, he used both a two word, "sea shells," and a single combined word, "seashells," for his publications. The list shown here (Fig. 1) is from 1971 and pretty much got shelved as I was more involved with flying jets for the United States Air Force than expanding a rather limited shell collection. In fact, it was not until the early 1990s that I next ordered shells through the mail, as I was preparing to retire from the Air Force. Prices had certainly changed in three decades, and would really change in the next couple of decades. As an aside, a couple or three decades after this early list by Eisenberg was published, I was in New York and looked up The Collector's Cabinet. It held Egyptian and other Old World artifacts, no shells.

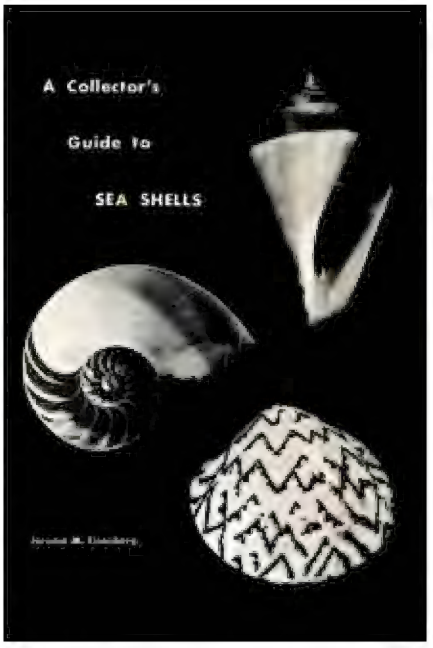


Fig. 1 Eisenberg's shell listing with a title very similar to what he would use a decade later for his book.

This 20+ year gap in my involvement in mail order shell dealer lists meant that I lacked material when it was suggested I do a story about bygone mail order shell lists. Luckily, the same person who suggested the story, Will Ritter of Astoria, Oregon, also had a stack of old dealer lists and he was willing to send them my way. Bruce Neville of College Station, Texas, added quite a few more lists, and both Harry Lee and Anne Joffe corrected errors in this article and provided additional names.

Today, of course, shells are primarily purchased through online auction sites, online dealer sites, and general sales sites (e.g. eBay), but from the 1960s through the early 2000s, the mail order shell list was the primary method of offering up specimen shells for collectors. From hand-typed to glossy print, various shell lists made their way to mail boxes around the world. Only a few well-known dealers, Sue Hobbs of New Jersey comes to mind, never sent out a list, depending upon word of mouth generated by shell show participants. During this period we even had a publication by Tom Rice (now of Thailand, then of Port Gamble, Washington) that compiled the prices from the various lists. Colloquially known as "Rice's Prices," or more formally: "Rice's Prices ... A Catalog of Dealers' Prices for Shells: Marine, Land & Freshwater" (Fig. 2)

"Rice's Prices" was a bound volume of close to 200 pages, listing shell names and prices. This was an edition that could actually be carried to shell shows, replacing the multi-pound, "Wagner and Abbott's Standard Catalog of Shells" (first edition published in 1964 as "Van Nostrand's Standard Catalog of Shells" by Robert J. L. Wagner and R. Tucker Abbott, second edition in 1968, and third edition with the name change in 1978) (Fig. 3). The Wagner and Abbott tome was meant partially as a price guide, but mainly as a complete listing of shelled molluscan species with scientific name, author, date, locality, size, and comments on taxonomy and other relevant data. Included, aside from taxonomic information, were several color maps of the world and select areas, a glossary, a number of black and white images of shells, shell values, world record shell sizes, a blank set of pages for the reader's shell collection data, and an index. It is a marvelous publication, but only really usable when supported on a desk or table - it is heavy. The Tom Rice publication was light and easily carried. With "Rice's Prices" you had the scientific name, author, date, locality, and price (often a price range).

Tom Rice also published, "A Sheller's Directory of Clubs, Books, Periodicals and Dealers." Here a collector could look up dealers by country, and in the case of the US, by state. While stationed in Washington, D.C., I found Mique's Molluscs listed in Virginia and a phone call and short drive later was picking through shells at the home of Pinky and Mique Pinkerton.

During this same period, "The Registry of World Record Size Shells" (Fig. 4) went through several iterations as a separate published document. It started out as *Lost Operculum Club List of Champions*, published by the Conchological Club of Southern California, from the late 1950s to the 1970s, eventually becoming an online publication (wrs-shells.com).

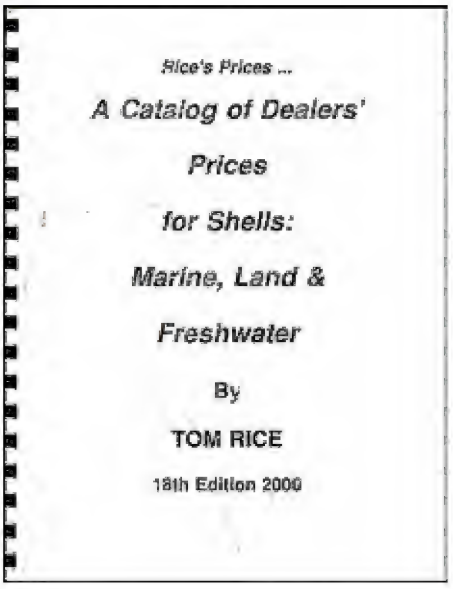


Fig. 2 Tom Rice's very useful publication of shell prices.

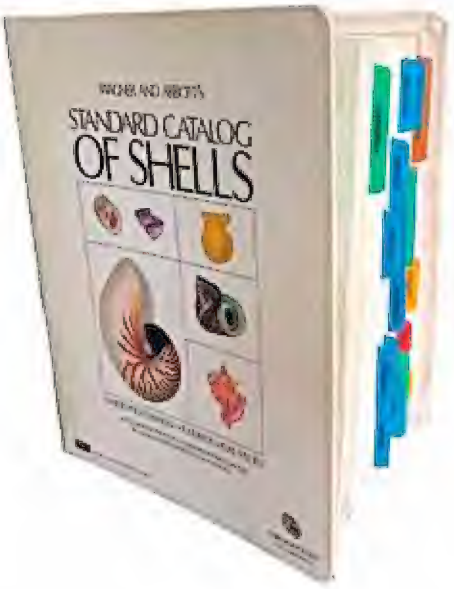


Fig. 3 Wagner & Abbott's shell catalog with 'tons' of information.

Fig. 4 The listing of record sized shells has had many iterations.

Fig. 5 The 'Portland Catalogue' was annonymously written by Lightfoot (see Brunner & Brunner, 2019).

Fig. 6 Röding wrote the 'Bolten Catalogue' and eventually gained credit for a number of valid molluscan species names.

Shell lists originated hundreds of years ago as catalog listings for auctions of antiquities and objects of natural history (sea shells, gems, fossils, etc.). Two of the better known 'lists' were the 'Portland Catalogue' (Fig. 5) and the 'Bolten Catalogue' (Fig. 6). These are of some importance for a number of reasons, including: both catalogs were determined to be nomenclaturally valid by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN), giving us valid species names by the Rev. John Lightfoot (1735-1788), as author in 1786, of the 'Portland Catalogue' ("A Catalogue of a Very Valuable Collection of Cameos, Intaglios, and Precious Stones, and Other Curiosities; Being Part of a Late Much Celebrated Cabinet, Many Out of the Arundel Collection; Which Will be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Skinner and Co. on Thursday the 8th of June, 1786, at Twelve O'clock, on the Premises, in Privy Garden, Whitehall; Late the Property of The Duchess Dowager of Portland, Deceased."); and Peter Friedrich Röding (1767-1846), as author in 1798, of the 'Bolten Catalogue' ("Museum Boltenianum sive catalogus cimeliorum e tribus regnis naturæ quæ olim collegerat Joa. Fried Bolten, M. D. p. d. per XL. annos proto physicus Hamburgensis. Pars secunda continens conchylia sive testacea univalvia, bivalvia & multivalvia") (Dance, 1966 & 1986; Lee, 2013; Brunner & Brunner, 2019; Lee &

Eichhorst, 2019). There were many such catalogs published during this time, as well as mailed to prospective buyers, but the buyers were pretty much limited to the wealthy and individuals interested in shells supported by the wealthy. Shell collecting did not really expand beyond the parlors of the well-to-do until the 20th Century.

In the 1700s, the Duchess of Portland purchased shells for her collection from specimens brought back from the Pacific voyages of Captain Cook - not a venue open to most people of that time. In the 1800s, shell collecting grew in popularity as evidenced by a shell identification book authored by Edgar Allan Poe in 1839. "The Conchologist's First Book or, A System of Testaceous Malacology," sold out in two months and was reissued as a second edition in 1840 - the best selling work by Poe during his lifetime (Eichhorst, 2009).

By the early 1900s, more people had access to inexpensive means of travel and thus to beaches and oceans. Added to this was the advent and subsequent growing use of scuba following WWII. The ocean's molluscan world was now open to collecting. Mailing lists of available shells were sent out and old data slips will show names like: Hugh Fulton (1930s), G.R. Webb (1930s-1940s), Mrs. Francis Knight (Esther) Hadley (1950s), Frank Lyman (1950s), Walter Webb (1950s), and John Q. Burch (1950s). These early lists were usually shallow water material gathered by hand and mid-depth material from hand dredges.

In the 1960s shell lists seemed to really gain popularity and you now start seeing some names familiar to today's collectors. One such list was offered by COA's own Donald Dan. About his shell list he states,

> After I graduated from high school in 1957, in Manila, I joined my dad in starting his paper mill machinery business. I worked during the day at his office and took college classes at night. My interest in shells, started in high school, continued to grow. Toto Olivera, the high school classmate who started my interest in shells, joined me in forming a mail order specimen shell business. It prospered. Seven years later, we had some 200 regular worldwide customers. Several buyers eventually became close friends. Due to my fully loaded weekday schedule, the only free time left were weekends: for sorting shells, cleaning shells, answering mail orders, preparing new lists, and packing shells. Soon I had to solicit two helpers to work on weekends, my brother Victor and another former classmate Donny Montelibano. We were busy. In 1964, I decided to make a life change to immigrate to the US. Our mail order business was sold to brother Victor, who eventually decided to change the business format to wholesale only, thus ending our seven year shell mail order business.

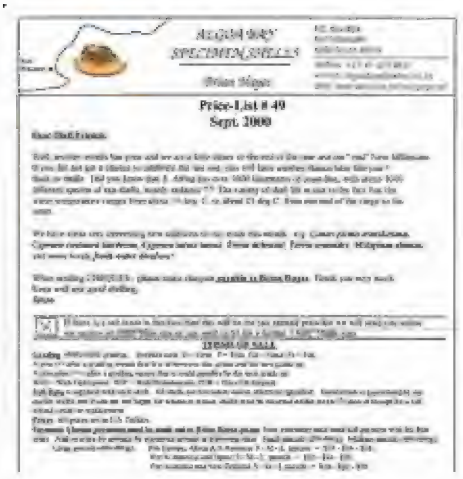
From the 1960s through the 2000s we had a plethora of shell lists*, with plenty of names we recognize still today:

The Abbey - Bob Foster & Charles Glass, Bob & Diane Foster, John Phillips & Marty Beals
Aegean Seashells - Peter Demertzis, Greece
Algoa Bay - Brian Hayes, South Africa & US
Aquashells - Dorothy Merenda Janowsky, Nevada
Atlantic Specimen Shells - Antonio Nora, Portugal
Australian Seashells - Hugh Morrison and Simone Pfuetzner, Australia
Caribbean Specimen Shells - Glenn Duffy, Florida
Caribbean Specimen Shells - Ted Kalafut, Florida
Charles Cardin Specimen Shells - Charles Cardin, Florida
Collector's Cove and Brandyberry Museum - John J. Brandyberry, Pennsylvania
Dick Petit - North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
Donald Dan & Toto Olivera, Manila, PI (1950s-1960s)
Dov Peled Export Import - Dov Peled, Israel
Femorale - José & Marcus Coltro, Brazil & Italy
Florida Tree Snails - Archie L. Jones, Florida
Gifts from the Sea - Frank Walker, New York & Massachusetts
J&J Shell Gems - Joseph A. Martinez & Jana A. Tompkins, California
Joel Green, LTD - Joel Green, California
La Concha - Rick Negus, California
La Jolla Cave & Shell Shop - Don Pisor, California
Leonard Hill Shells - Leonard Hill, Florida
Mal de Mer Enterprises - Bob Janowski, New York
Mique's Molluscs - Mique & Pinkie Pinkerton, Virginia
Mrs. Edna Marcott, Florida
Northeast Natural History Imports - Paul Monfils, Rhode Island
The Outer Reef - M.S. Frein, California
Pan Earth & Caribbean Specimen Shells - Ted Kalafut, Florida
Panamic Specimen Shells - Virginia Upton, Arizona
Phillip W. Clover Shells - Phillip W. Clover, California
Randy Allamand's Shells - Randy Allamand, Florida
Randy Bridges
Rosie's Shells - Rosemary Adams, Nevada
Sanibel Shellers - Fredric Briskin, Florida
Schooner Specimen Shells - Ross Mayhew (now Ian & Allison Holden), Nova Scotia

*Regrettably, I was unable to obtain a shell list for every dealer listed here.

Sea and Shore Shells - Tom Rice, Washington and Thailand
Sea Gifts - Stephen Whatmough, South Africa
Seashell Treasures Books - M. Sally & Steven J. Long, California
Shamaron Shells - Marty Gill & Betty Larson, Florida
The Shell Connection - Bonnie Christofel, Florida
Shell Gems - Maurice L. Chapel, Pennsylvania
Shell World - June & Cade Huie, Texas
Shelloak - John Bernard, Tennessee
Shells - Guido T. Poppe, Belgium and Philippines
Shells of the Seas, Inc. - Kirk Anders, Florida
The Shell Store - Bob & Betty Lipe, Florida
Showcase Shells - Al, Bev & Neil Deynzer
Simon's Specimen Shells, LTD - Simon Aiken, York, UK
Specimen Shells - Jeanne L. Danilko, Massachusetts
Specimen Shells - Kim C. Hutsell, California
Specimen Shells - Richard M. Kurz, Wisconsin
Specimen Shells of the Philippines - Mildred M. Montilla, Philippines
Specimen Shells Sales - Dan Spelling, California
Thomas Honker Specimen Shells - Thomas Honker, Florida
Waneta Ames - Arkansas
Werner Massier Specimen Shells - Werner Massier, South Africa & Namibia
Worldwide Marine - Robert R. Maxwell, Jr., Utah
Worldwide Specimen Shells - Edward T. Schelling, Florida
Worldwide Specimen Shells - Richard Goldberg, Maryland

The Abbey - Bob Foster & Charles Glass, Bob & Diane Foster, John Phillips & Marty Beals. The Abbey went through several iterations and proprietors over the years. Shown here are lists from 1988 (Bob Foster & Charles Glass), 1994 (Bob & Diane Foster), and 2003 (John Phillips & Marty Beals). Through it all they were known for quality shells and great service.



Algoa Bay - Brian Hayes, South Africa & US. When a Russian trawler pulled up "a ton" of *Cypraea fultoni* in 1999, Brian let his readers know he was going to the Paris Show where they would be offered. Those of us who took advantage of this received specimens for a small fraction of what had been the going price, and what was again the price within a year.

Aquashells - Dorothy Merenda Janowsky, Nevada. Dorothy (one of the original founders of COA) has four decades of experience as a shell dealer and just recently decided to retire. She kindly donated her remaining stock of high quality and uncommon shells to COA. She even paid postage! Thank you Dorothy.

Australian Seashells - Hugh Morrison and Simone Pfuetzner, Australia. Hugh and Simone founded Australian Seashells in 1995 (it is now the largest licensed seashell dealership in Australia) and sent specialized lists out to specific customers. I met them at a COA convention and when they learned I was working on a nerite book, Hugh said he would be on the lookout for nerites. What this actually meant was that he had his divers in some fairly nasty rivers collecting nerites and he bought old collections of nerites. No great profit to be had, but certainly useful for me. Many of the specimens in the book came from Hugh and Simone, and many were not, and to this day are still not, available anywhere else.

Caribbean Specimen Shells - Glenn Duffy, Florida. Glenn not only sold Caribbean shells, he also set up and managed many extremely popular shelling trips to the Caribbean and South America (Margarita Island).

Caribbean Specimen Shells - Ted Kalafut, Florida.

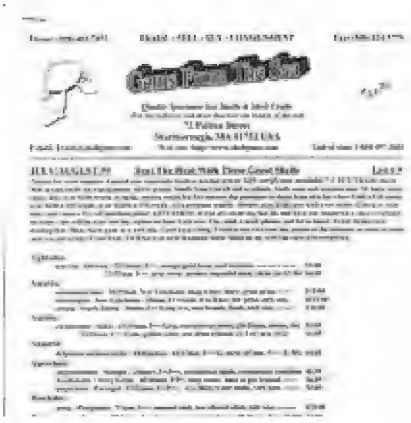
Charles Cardin Specimen Shells - Charles Cardin, Florida. Charles was known for quality specimen shells and was a fixture at COA conventions. There are hundreds of collectors with shells with a Charles Cardin data slip.

Collector's Cove and Brandyberry Museum - John J. Brandyberry, Pennsylvania. I first visited John in 1976, when Collector's Cove was in his basement in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I do not think he planned on visitors, but he graciously let me dig through cabinets of specimen shells. While my nose was buried in shell drawers, he sold my wife, Peter Dance's new book – "The Collector's Encyclopedia of Shells," and hid it in our Suburban as a surprise Father's Day gift. Sometime later he moved to a facility in town - the Brandyberry Museum.

Dick Petit - North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Before being known as a book dealer with book lists, Dick put out shell lists. He was extremely intelligent and brutally honest. After we became friends I often sent him copies of different portions of the nerite books I was writing. His critiques were invaluable because he did not know how to respond except with critical honesty. He also sent me responses he was writing to other people over the years, asking if I would provide a little editing to "make it polite," i.e., not hurt someone's feelings.

Donald Dan [& Toto Olivera], Philippines and USA. Donald and his original shell business have been covered above, but many COA members do not know the hours and money he has for decades devoted to our organization. For over four decades, he donated numerous rare shells and natural history objects for the oral auctions and for COA raffles, as well as spending countless hours as the COA board member responsible for the COA Academic Grant Program and COA Awards for shell shows. Donald personally funds the tri-fold flyer promoting the annual COA convention.

Femorale - José & Marcus Coltro, Brazil & Italy. Both José and Marcus have served at different times on the COA Board and have given generously of time, money, and shells to COA. They provided the COA website and for years our 'webmaster' was a paid Femorale employee doing COA chores for free. Their web site, www.femorale.com has a photo gallery of thousands of shells for use with identification, PDFs of various publications, and links to various shell-related web sites. They have also always supported *American Conchologist* with high quality shell images whenever asked.



Gifts from the Sea - Frank Walker, New York & Massachusetts.

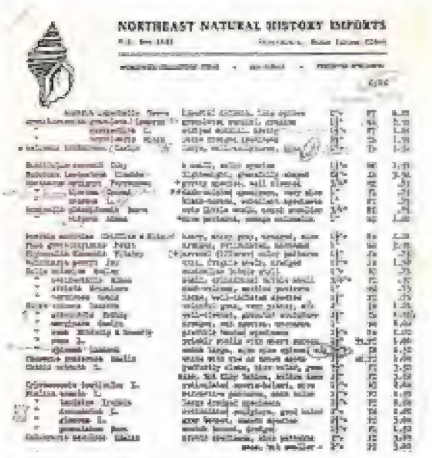
J&J Shell Gems - Joseph A. Martinez & Jana A. Tompkins, California.

La Concha - Rick Negus, California.

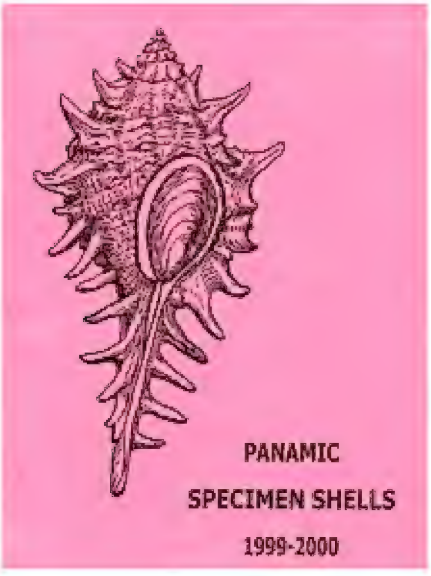
La Jolla Cave & Shell Shop - Don Pisor, California. Don was an avid supporter of COA and a constant and helpful presence during countless conventions. Like Donald Dan, his donations to COA auctions and raffles raised the quality of what we could offer to our members.

Leonard Hill Shells - Leonard Hill, Florida. Lenny was known for glossy paper shell lists and only the very highest quality shells. He passed away at too young an age and much of his collection was sold at the Louisville, Kentucky COA Convention in 1999.

Mal de Mer Enterprises - Bob Janowsky, New York. Bob is an original member of COA and while his shell lists eventually gave way to shell books, his interest and support for COA have not waivered.



Northeast Natural History Imports - Paul Monfils, Rhode Island. Paul had a self-described "basement full of shells," after he quit the mail order business. While he was in business, he hunted up special requests of mine any number of times. Lots of us have those blue data slips on some really nice specimens.

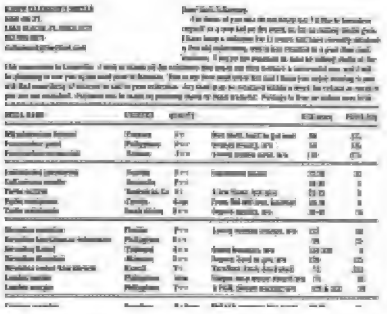


Panamic Specimen Shells - Virginia Upton, Arizona.

The Outer Reef - M.S. Frein, California.

Phillip W. Clover Shells - Phillip W. Clover, California. Phil approaches the shell business like he does his life – lots of energy and a positive attitude. He had a goal of hitting 60 years as a shell dealer, that was almost derailed by the California fires of 2018. He lost his house and his complete stock of specimen shells. Despite this unbelievable setback, he was determined to continue on as a shell dealer and is probably the last such dealer still sending out mailing lists of shells. He has now passed his 60 year goal.

Pan Earth & Caribbean Specimen Shells - Ted Kalafut, Florida.



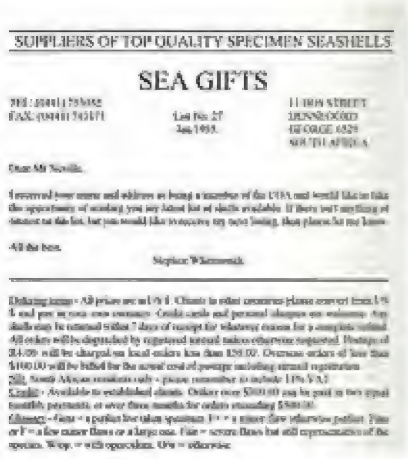
Randy Allamand's Shells - Randy Allamand, Florida. Randy is still active at the COA bourse, but no longer sends out a list. His bourse table always has a special bargain or two available.

Rosie's Shells - Rosemary Adams, Nevada. Like a few other shell mail order dealers, Rosemary asked customers to hold payment until they had received their shells and were satisfied with the quality. She and her daughter worked tirelessly to ensure quality shells at reasonable prices.

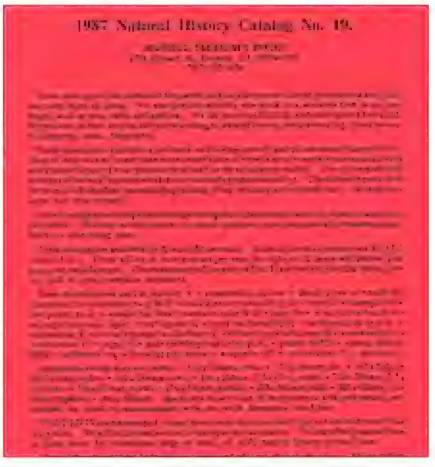
Schooner Specimen Shells

Schooner Specimen Shells - Ross Mayhew (now Ian & Allison Holden -- online), Nova Scotia. Ross was a fun dealer to talk to and he had some unusual shells at times. I once bought a *Conus cedonuli* that was quite inexpensive due to a large reef scar. When the shell came, instead of an 'F--' it was an 'F+' with an almost too small to see ding in the outer whorl. I called Ross, told him he sent the wrong shell, he said, "No, I forgot I had this one and substituted it because it was much nicer - same price."

Sea and Shore Shells - Tom Rice, USA and Thailand. Tom is an institution in the world of shells. From his shell museum in Port Gamble, Washington; to his support of conchology worldwide and many years publishing: *Marine Shells of the Pacific Northwest* (1971); *Of Sea and Shore* (1970-2004); *Rice's Prices* (periodically through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s); *A Sheller's Directory of Club's, Books, Periodicals and Dealers* (periodically through the 1970s and 1980); and most recently *An Index for G.T. Poppe's Philippine Marine Mollusks* (2012).



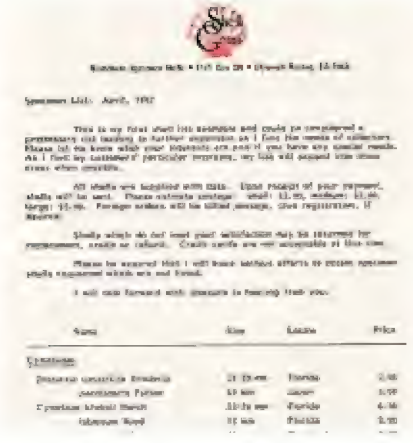
Sea Gifts - Stephen Whatmough, South Africa.



Seashell Treasures Books - M. Sally & Steven J. Long, California.

Shamaron Shells - Marty Gill & Betty Larson, Florida.

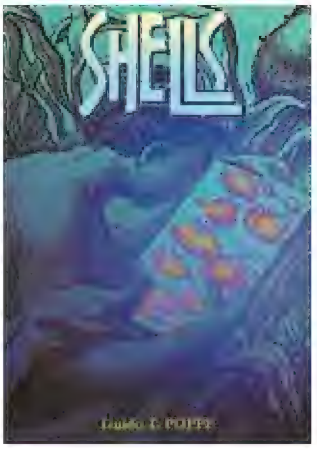
The Shell Connection - Bonnie Christofel, Florida.



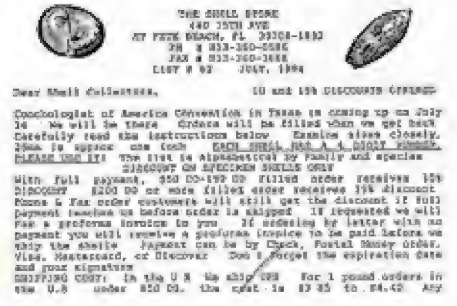
Shell Gems - Maurice L. Chapel, Pennsylvania.

Shells of the Seas, Inc. - Kirk Anders, Florida.

Shelloak - John Bernard, Tennessee. John was a unique character in the shell world. When he went to shell shows or conventions, he drove his car and often left thousands of dollars worth of shells in the car – Styrofoam boxes of shells under old torn and filthy blankets in a beat up, rusted, heap, that he figured no one would want to touch, much less break into and steal stuff. When Bruce Neville and I started up the High Desert Shell Club in Albuquerque, John sent a large box of shells for an Easter egg-like shell hunt for our first meeting.



Shells - Guido T. Poppe, Belgium and Philippines. Another institution in the shell world, Guido, along with his son Philippe, has provided consistently quality publications, resources, and of course, shells, to the public since 1994. The shell listing shown here is certainly the classiest to be mailed out in recent times. A bound volume of 95 pages, it dates from before his official move to the Philippines and the 2003 establishment of Conchology, Inc. The list (book) contains thousands of shells for sale. Aside from providing quality shells, he also authored the five volume set: *Philippine Marine Mollusks* (2008-2017), the two volume set (along with Yoshihiro Goto): *European Seashells* (1991-1993), and publishes the ongoing *Visaya* journals with new species descriptions (2004-the present). The Poppe web site, www.conchology.be, provides an 'encyclopedia' of over 34,000 shells, a listing of hundreds of thousands of shells for sale, a calendar of shell events, numerous journals (like Tom Rice's *Of Sea and Shore*) available as free PDFs, a listing of shellers of past and present, tips for collecting, and links to useful shell-related web sites – to list maybe half of what is available. Like José & Marcus Coltro of Femorale, Guido and Philippe are always more than willing to provide high quality images for use in *American Conchologist*.



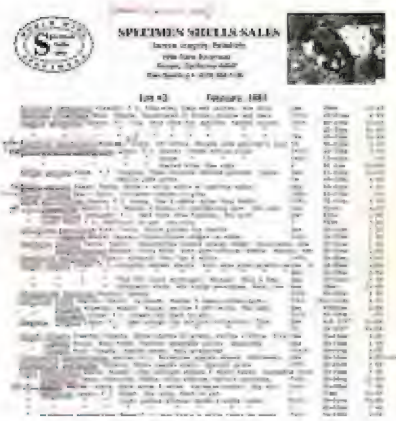
The Shell Store - Bob & Betty Lipe, Florida. Bob and Betty of St. Petersburg, were genuinely nice folks. Generous in nature and fun to be with. Bob wrote and self-published 'the book' on marginellids, "Marginellas" (1991) and Betty, when she found out the 'advertizing manager' for *American Conchologist* quit at the same time I was taking over as editor, immediately volunteered to fill that position. While Bob held down the fort at the bourse shell booth, Betty went to each shell dealer arranging for ads for the following year.

Showcase Shells - Al, Bev & Neil Deynzer. Again, genuinely nice folks and full of good-natured humor. The Deynzers are a fixture at COA conventions where their shell lists came alive. If you have a great quality shell sitting on blue foam in a plastic case, it probably came from the Deyners.

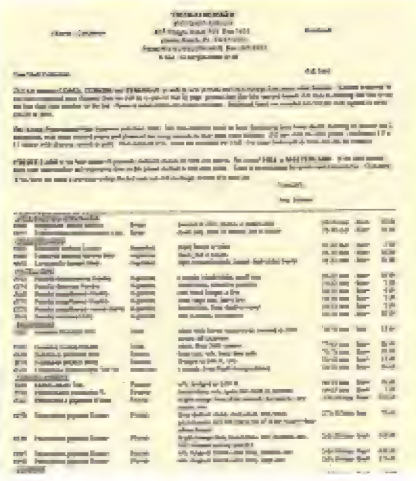
Simon's Specimen Shells, LTD - Simon Aiken, York, UK. Readers of *American Conchologist* know Simon as both a shell dealer and a contributor to our journal with articles and incredible photographs from places as varied as Cuban jungles to Asian caves. About shell lists he says he used to send them out to a small number of clients, but "Now, I print lists 'on request', but I think I've done only one copy in the last three years!" Simon also has always agreed to provide photos for use by *American Conchologist*.

Specimen Shells - Jeanne L. Danilko, Massachusetts.

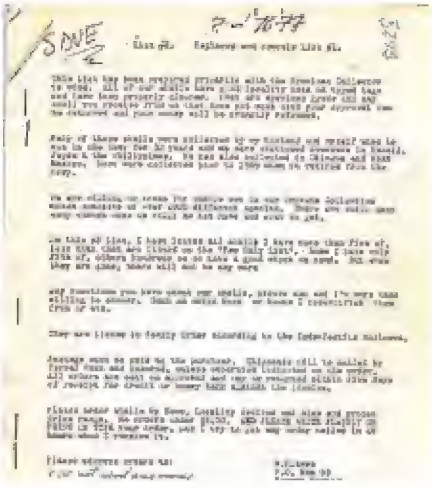
Specimen Shells - Richard M. Kurz, Wisconsin.



Specimen Shells Sales - Dan Spelling, California. Dan was one of my first shell list dealers when I got back 'into shells' in the 1990s. I would decide what I wanted from his list and call him. He would then try to decipher my terrible pronunciations of scientific shell names. Dan had serious health issues, but was always upbeat and generous. He once refused to sell me a murex because he said the only specimen left was "too ratty" for sale or even to give away. Another time I ordered an expensive cowrie (*Callistocypraea leucodon* (Broderip, 1828), (at that time just *Cypraea leucodon*). Dan had gotten quite a few in a special deal and was offering them at a great price. When the shell arrived in the mail, the invoice was 25% of what I expected. I called Dan and he said he switched out the pricey one for one that looked as good but had a small sand pit scar, thinking I would rather have it as cowries were not my main interest. He was 100% correct.



Thomas Honker Specimen Shells - Thomas Honker, Florida.



Waneta Ames - Arkansas.

Werner Massier Specimen Shells - Werner Massier, South Africa & Namibia.

Worldwide Marine - Robert R. Maxwell, Jr., Utah.

Worldwide Specimen Shells – Edward T. Schelling, Florida. Ed ran his shell business out of a residential house converted to shells. Shell cabinets and shelves lined every wall except the kitchen and bathroom. I first met Ed while on a trip to give a talk at the US Naval school at Pensacola, FL. I finished rather late and then drove the hour plus to Ed's where he kept the lights on for someone he did not know.

Worldwide Specimen Shells – Richard Goldberg, Maryland. Another institution in the shell world, Richard has been in the shell business in one fashion or another since the very early days of COA. He served as editor of (what was then) *Conchologists of America Bulletin* from 1978 to 1982, and served a term as President of COA.

That pretty much completes this trip down shell list memory lane. I am sure I missed some dealer lists, for which I apologize. There are also dealers listed with whom I had no dealings and can thus provide no anecdotes, again, apologies. During the time these shell lists span, COA went from an initial eight members (1972), to almost 1,000 members (1987), to our high mark of over 1,200 members (1992). The last two decades has seen COA membership gradually drop to a present number of just over 500 members (2020). At the same time, as previously noted, there is only a single shell list (that I am aware of) remaining - Phil Clover. There are still plenty of quality shell dealers, although pretty much everything is now online with expansive web sites and auctions. The trust of 'pay after you receive the shells' is now gone and there are shells offered on some sites by 'dealers' with limited knowledge of what they are selling. COA remains a vibrant organization and still provides academic grants of over $25,000 each year. As our support base dwindles, however, this may become impossible to sustain. A worldwide pandemic obviously does not help matters. Hopefully, we can return to Melbourne, Florida, for the COA 2021 Convention.

Thomas E. Eichhorst
thomas@nerite.com

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COA 50th Anniversary Lapel Pin Design Contest

2022 is the 50th Anniversary of the Conchologists of America. Honoring this milestone, COA would like a special lapel pin for the 2022 Convention.

We are asking COA members to submit entries in a pin design contest to be held at the 2021 COA Convention, where attendees will view the pin concept art in a poster session and vote on their choice. The winner will then be announced at the program session for the 2022 Convention.[1]

Interested in entering? This is your chance to design something new and original. Consider Internet searching 'lapel pins' (also called pin badges), viewing different types to see how the designs are constructed. Take notice of which lines on the pins are made of metal, and which portions are paint. This will help guide you in design. The images herein are pins with a Neptune shell to show how it has been portrayed in the past.

Basic design elements to incorporate:
– COA or Conchologists of America.
– 50 or 50th Anniversary.
– Date Range: 1972-2022.
– The Neptune Shell.
– The pin's 'Gold' metal color.
– Shape: round, oval, diamond, other.
– Size: should be about 1.5 to 2 inch (38-51 mm) wide and/or tall.

Colors to consider incorporating:
– Use solid colors.
– COA - aqua blue and cream or white.
– Neptune - brown lineation.
– Limit the number of colors used.

Other considerations:
– The drawing outline will be represented as gold metal on the pin.

– No fine detail; details will be lost or make the image muddy when reduced.
– Test-print your design printed at 1.5 to 2" to see how it looks reduced.

Basic Poster Session requirements:
– Image should be placed on a backboard or in a frame that is about 2 feet tall.
– If possible, please provide a table top easel or method of holding up your backboard.
– Include the concept art in the largest image that is appropriate, and a reduced image of about 1.5" to 2" (38-51 mm) wide/tall.
– Multiple design variations are acceptable. Identify each with a letter: a, b, c, etc.
– The entry should be anonymous; do not include the entrant's name on the poster.
– The concept art does not need to be a finished product. If your design is chosen, it may be revised for the final product.
– Additional details will be provided in the registration form packet.

How to Enter: an entry form is included in the COA 2021 registration forms provided in this issue of *American Conchologist*, and at: http://ConchologistsofAmerica.org/

Questions, or if you are unable to attend the convention and wish to enter, please contact:
karlynnmorgan@earthlink.net

COA 2022 Pin Project Committee: Karlynn Morgan, Amy Dick, and Leslie Crnkovic.

[1] If the 2021 Convention is canceled, the COA pin committee will determine another method of entry and selection by the general membership, such as through the Conchologists of America website and email.

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Send your submissions to:
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Australian Museum
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Sydney NSW 2010, Australia
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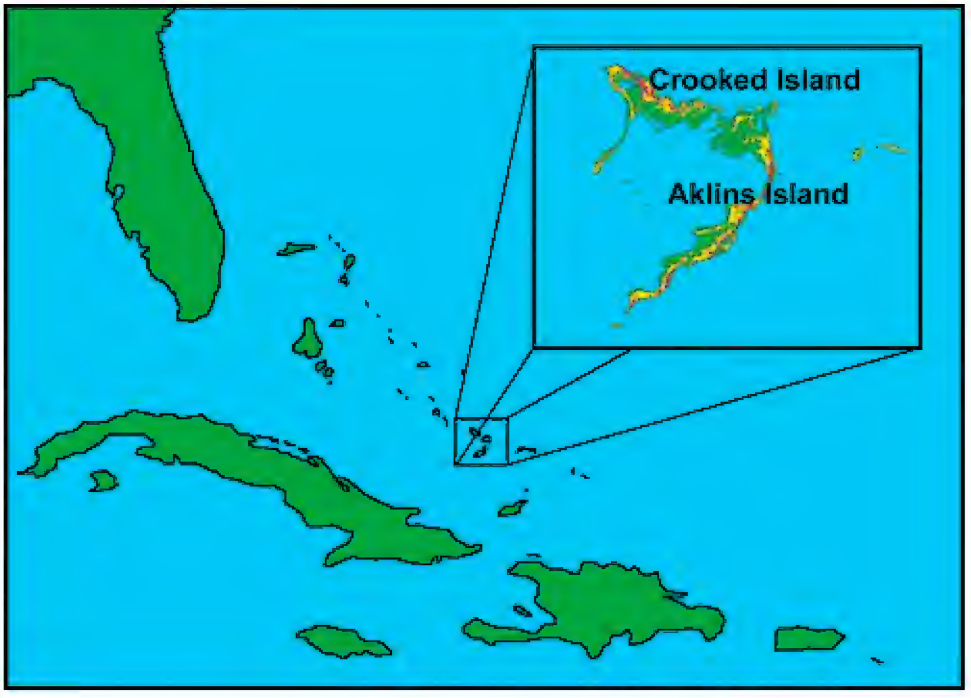
Crooked Island adventure

F. Matthew Blaine



Back in 2014, Dona and I signed up for a shell collecting trip to Crooked Island. It was sponsored by The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum. We had been on another expedition sponsored by the museum to Mexico, and it was a great experience. Anne Joffe headed it up. We had also been on several fossil collecting adventures set up by Gary Schmeltz, which were also superb. Anne and Gary were again going to be our hosts, so we knew it would be an outstanding trip. Little did we know then that it would be one of the best shell collecting trips that we would ever take!

As soon as we found out about it we immediately sent our money to the museum with high hopes of getting our places before it filled up. We were fortunate enough to get our spot reserved. Sometime after that we had a big surprise. We were contacted by José Leal from the museum and were informed that they had decided not to sponsor trips anymore. We were told to wait and arrangements would be made to refund our money. Almost immediately after that we received communication from Anne and Gary stating that they had decided to go ahead and do the trip on their own. If we still wanted to go with them they would make it a very special trip using the extra money that would have been donated to the museum to add to our experience. This trip was going to be even better than we had expected! We were excited with the prospect of improved plans to visit Crooked Island. This was going to be an incredible experience!

Shortly afterward we received the following message from Anne, "First, I will be making hotel reservations for the night before, Sunday, May 11, 2014, at the hotel in Ft. Lauderdale, right near our airport. I need to know how many rooms to book, so please email me back if you are planning to stay that night." Our flight the next morning left at 9 am and we needed to be there earlier, so it was easier to spend the night before. The cost of the hotel room was included in our trip price. Also, parking at the airport was free. Later she wrote, "...since this is no longer a trip through a museum, Gary and I have added some extras to the trip, such as a tour of the island, lunch in the small town one day, and some other surprises we think you will like. They will enhance your island experiences." Things were getting better and better!

On the morning of Wednesday, May 12th 2014, after breakfast at the Motel (Fig. 1), we climbed aboard one of the two charter planes which would fly us to Crooked Island, where we would land next to our accommodations for the next five days. I sat in the co-pilot seat and our Captain kept a close eye on me. (Fig. 2) Our destination on Crooked Island was Pittstown Point Landing. It had its own runway for small planes to land. The Pittstown Point Lighthouse was right off of our destination. (Fig. 3) After landing successfully, both of our pilots posed in front of the Pittstown Point Landing sign. (Fig. 4) We had the whole place to ourselves for the next five days. Taking a quick look around the establishment I noted the dining building and lecture hall (Fig. 5), waterfront adult refreshment lounge and entertainment building (Fig. 6), and our beach with lighthouse in the distance (Fig. 7), were all within an easy walk from our cabin. After getting our bags we hurried to get ready for a quick snorkeling survey just off of the beach. We found the water a little churned up due to wave action, but very refreshing after a day of travel.

The next morning we found our companions having coffee in the beach hut where Duane Kauffmann was sorting his pile of micro shells that he had already collected. (Fig. 8) We had a big day ahead of us, but the wind was up and the water still cloudy. We headed for the harbor where we would board our boats and where we found the "Welcome to Crooked Island" sign. (Fig. 9) The boats were waiting for us. We had several boats each with an experienced captain

Fig. 1 Breakfast at the hotel, front table left to right: Bernice Schmelz, Lynn Foster, Gary Schmelz; back table left to right: Rita Stonehouse, Linda Powers, Dona Blaine.

Fig. 2 Our Captain keeping a close eye on me.

Fig. 3 Pittstown Point Lighthouse sits on Bird Rock Cay, just off Pittstown Point on the northwestern portion of Crooked Island. It stands 112 feet above sea level. It began operation in 1876

Fig. 4 The intrepid aviators who successfully got us from Florida to Crooked Island.

Fig. 5 Dining building and lecture hall.

Fig. 6 Entertainment and refreshment lounge.

Fig. 7 Our beach and covered rest area.

Fig. 8 Left to right: Dave Kauffmann (sorting micros), Lynn Foster, Linda Powers, Dona Blaine, and Rita Stonehouse.

Fig. 9 Welcome sign on the beach.

Fig. 10 One of the boats used to take us to our different shelling locations.

to take us to our shelling destinations. (Fig. 10) This day we would be driven along the coast and dropped off at the beach of our choice to explore and collect as we walked. There were virtually no buildings or manmade structures on these beaches, just miles and miles of pristine natural environment. (Fig. 11) We walked and took in the beauty, stopping from time to time for collecting shells and taking pictures (Figs. 12-15), but there was a problem. In the distance, moving in between us and our home port, there were huge thunder heads building. We decided to beat it back in our fast boats before the storm cut us off from home and hit us on the beaches. (Fig. 16) We made it back just before the storm and saved time by disembarking the boats at the beach instead of the marina. (Fig. 17)

Fig. 11 We had miles of open beaches and beautiful blue water to ourselves.

Fig. 12 Dona examines high tide wrack for shells.

Fig. 13 An endemic dragonfly waits for passing prey.

Fig. 14 Hunting for treasures on the beach.

Fig. 15 A small *Cassis flammea* (Linnaeus, 1758), beach but in great shape.

Fig. 16 Building storm clouds between us and home.

Fig. 17 Disembarking on the beach instead of the marina.

Fig. 18 Empty land snails under brush along the beach.

Fig. 19 Anne Joffe gathering land snails for later identification.

Fig. 20 A local passion flower – one of over 550 species native to or introduced to the southeastern U.S., Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Africa.

Fig. 21 Our only competition for a shady spot with a view was provided by the numerous island goats.

The next morning was a brilliant day. Anne and I were out early collecting land snail shells (Figs. 18-19) before we headed out for another day of combing more uninhabited beaches. We would be dropped off by our boat and picked up later down the beach. Our boat Captain followed us just off shore, hanging on the hook while we explored. The beaches were untouched by human beings with many flowers, insects, and shells for us to enjoy. ,We spent several hours walking down the beach looking for treasure and finding it. (Figs. 20-22)

The next day was devoted to taking a bus tour of the island and visiting several small communities. We were picked up at the covered bus stand at our accommodations, where we would gather. Our wonderful bus driver and tour guide was Marsha, who bubbled with enthusiasm and friendliness. She was extremely knowledgeable about her island and its residents and shared that with us as she drove. We saw stores, the library, homes, a school in session, municipal buildings, and the jail where we had a complete tour. (Fig. 23) Then after a full day of sightseeing and a little shopping, we headed back to our accommodations to prepare for a dinner out on the town.

Day five, we set out for distant shores and clear water to collect shells and snorkel. Once again we had several boats each, with our personal driver who took us to separate locations to shell. The day was beautiful and

Fig. 22 A squirrelfish, *Neoniphon marianus* (Cuvier, 1829) under the ledge (upper left) and two Atlantic or Caribbean blue tangs, *Acanthurus coeruleus* Bloch & J. G. Schneider, 1801, in front. The blue tang starts out life as a yellow fish with blue eyes and gradually changes to blue with maturity.

Fig. 23 Anne Joffe gets a personal tour of the jail.

Fig. 24 Headed out to a new collecting spot.

Fig. 25 Dona shows off a seastar before returning it to its habitat.

the water color spectacular. (Fig. 24) Some of the boats stopped along the way and dropped people off on the shore to do some shelling. Our group opted to spend our time snorkeling in crystal clear water. There were few shells but many fish and other interesting creatures to be seen in these waters. (Figs. 25-27) To see more in a shorter time by swimming, our small group used a tow line on which we were pulled through the water behind the boat. (Fig. 28) After getting over the feeling of being bait trolled on a fishing line, it was a lot of fun. When we came to our final dive destination the boat stopped and we did more exploring. At one point I heard some noise that sounded like someone calling my name. I popped my head up and there was Gary Schmeltz telling me to look down between us. There was a huge stingray sleeping in the sand. It had covered itself with sand which made it blend in with the bottom. It was huge, maybe 10 feet in length, and by far the largest sting ray that I have seen. I tried to get Gary to dive down on one side and poke it a couple of times so that I could get a great photo from the other side, but unfortunately he declined. (Fig. 29)

This had been a great trip but now something unexpected happened. We were rounded up and taken back to a distant shore where we could see the other boats anchored and a bunch of people on the beach. When we got there we were treated to a lunch of freshly caught (in the previous hour) grouper fillets and lobster tails cooked over

Fig. 26 ***Nerita versicolor*** **Gmelin, 1791 on wave-splashed rocks.**

Fig. 29 A juvenile blue head wrasse, ***Thalassoma bifasciatum*** **(Bloch, 1791) – another color changing fish, swims above a pink tip anemone,** ***Condylactis gigantea*** **(Weinland, 1860), common throughout the Caribbean and in the aquarium trade.**

Fig. 28 Trolled through the water to new shelling spots.

Fig. 29 A large sting ray resting on the bottom.

Fig. 30 Fresh (very) fish dinner cooked and eaten on the beach – good food, great company, fantastic trip.

Fig. 31 A bright orange crab, ***Cardisoma guanhumi*** **Latareille, 1828 (a juvenile) bids us** ***adieu*****.**

Fig. 32 The group before we depart in two planes, from left to right, back row: Gary Schmelz, Dona Blaine, Linda Buschetta, Rita Stonehouse, Bernice Schmelz, Duane Kauffmann, Matt Blaine, Anne Joffe, David Joffe, Lynn Foster. Front: Holly Nordyke, Suzanne Bushetta, Kathy Zoss, Connie Miller, Carol Periad, and Linda Powers

an open fire on the beach. (Fig. 30) Shaky and his boat captains were stoking the fire and laying out the food. Fresh conch ceviche was served while we waited for the lobster and fish to cook. Other accompaniments had been prepared and brought from the Pittstown Point Landings Kitchen. While all of this was going on, our companions were taking trips back to the water to continue to hunt for shells.

That night we had a get together at the screened-in bar and lounge built over the water where a local band (which included our bartender) entertained all with pleasant live music and a few adult beverages. We were joined by several locals, including the constable of the island. The next morning we flew back to Fort Lauderdale and home with shells and memories of a unique and exciting adventure. (Figs. 31-32)

Thanks to Anne Joffe for providing names (and correct spelling) of the participants in our excellent adventure.

F. Matthew Blaine
Independent Researcher
Curatorial Associate
Delaware Museum of Natural History
Research Associate
The Florida State Collection of Arthropods
Research Associate
The McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity at the Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida

The first sinistral cowry

Don Cram and Michael Lyons

Sinistral shells amongst populations of gastropods that usually have dextral shells are rare, and in cowries, extremely rare. So rare, in fact, that their very existence was doubted as recently as the 1960s.

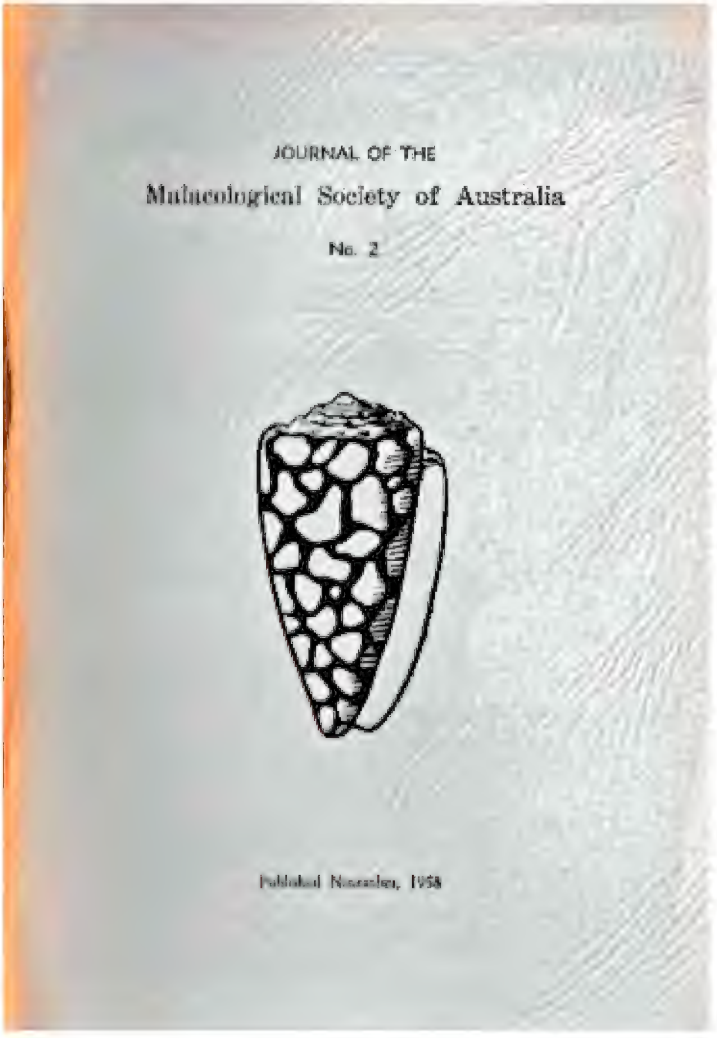
The first reference to a sinistral cowry in the literature was that of a specimen of *Notocypraea declivis* published by Bernard C. Cotton in 1958. In a paper on Western Australian Cowries, published in the *Journal of the Malacological Society of Australia*, Vol. 2, he wrote, "A sinistral specimen of *N. declivis* from Tasmania is in the S.A. Museum Collection. It was noticed by Lt. Col. R. J. Griffiths." (Cotton, 1958)

Later, in his 1962 Review of the Cypraeidae genus *Notocypraea*, published in the *Memoirs of the National Museum of Victoria*, Griffiths, writing about *Notocypraea declivis*, makes the following remark, "The only sinistral specimen of Cypraeidae known to the author is in the South Australian Museum." (Griffiths, 1962)

There the matter rested until 1964, when in an article in *Hawaiian Shell News*, Franz Schilder dismissed the idea of sinistral cowries. He wrote, "In cowries sinistral specimens are extremely rare, if indeed they occur at all. Among the 150,000 cowries the writer has examined personally during forty-four years special study there was no sinistral shell." He then writes, "R.J. Griffiths mentions a sinistral *Notocypraea declivis* which is preserved in the South Australian Museum: its curator would oblige many malacologists if he would publish an enlarged photograph, at least of the basal view of this curiosity." (Schilder, 1964)

In 1975, an enquiry to the South Australian Museum (SAM) revealed that they had no record of this specimen. In 2010, Harry G. Lee published an article on sinistral cowries in the September issue of *American Conchologist*. In it he recalls Schilder's scepticism regarding the veracity of Griffith's record and noted that "the gauntlet was never retrieved by Griffiths." (Lee, 2010) In the following year (Cram, 2011) in an article on the finding of a new sinistral cowry, the search for the specimen in 1975 was explained in detail, as was the integrity of Griffiths.

Recently one of us (ML), in an effort to track down every reference to *Notocypraea* in the literature, be it scientific or popular, located a paper published by Bernard Cotton in 1959, titled "Distorted Cowries" and published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* (V. 83 1959, pp. 109-110). In it are photographs of four views of the sinistral *N. declivis* and its SAM registration number was revealed. Recalling the history of the first authors attempts over the years to locate and confirm the existence of this shell, the discovery of this paper was incredibly exciting.



The first known reference to a sinistral cowry in the literature was that of a specimen of *Notocypraea declivis* published by Bernard C. Cotton in 1958, in the *Journal of the Malacological Society of Australia*, Vol. 2. The mention of a sinistral cowry is pretty much buried in two short sentences in the middle of a paragraph on the subfamily Cypraeovulinae.

Subsequent enquiries to the SAM not only revealed its existence, but that the specimen is still extant in that institution. As per the description by Cotton, there is an entry in the registration book (1959) D14602 (1) "Tas" and donated to the Museum by Verco. Images and details of the specimen were then kindly forwarded to us.

The four images of the sinistral *Notocypraea declivis* (G.B. Sowerby III, 1870) provided by the South Australian Museum are combined here into a single image. Specimen measurements are: tooth count – columellar part = 19, labral part = 24. Size and weight measurements (size measured on photography software): H = 20.6 mm, W = 13.5 mm, D = 10.4 mm, and weight = 1.28 gms.

Sir Joseph Verco, physician, malacologist, and collector, was honorary conchologist at the S.A. Museum from 1914 until his death in 1933, and his gifts of shells, literature, etc. formed an outstanding collection of southern Australian shells. He worked closely with the curator Bernard Cotton, who retired from that position in 1962.

R.J. Griffiths would have seen this specimen in 1958, prior to its registration in 1959, while examining type specimens of *Notocypraea euclia* Steadman & Cotton, 1946, that were dredged by Verco in 1912. The loss of these specimens has been recorded (Cram 2010).

It is clear now that the first sinistral cowry ever recorded was collected prior to 1933, and still exists, so why has this remained a mystery until now? Griffiths, whose review of *Notocypraea* in 1962, clearly upset collectors who seemingly preferred opinion over science, was largely ignored until 1973, when this author (DC) validated his work. Why then was the gauntlet was never retrieved? Griffiths was a man of facts and if anyone disputed him on a matter he knew to be factual, he would dismiss them out of hand and not deign to respond. It seems certain that he would have been aware of this paper and that, if in this one instance, he had responded to Schilder's challenge, years of ensuing controversy could have been avoided!

The practice at the time of attacking the competence and character of Griffiths rather than the content of his research is not unknown to this author. Being not readily available, his 1962 review slipped under the radar and was not widely referenced, but when so, findings were ignored. In summary "If you don't like the message shoot the messenger." The story of Griffiths' life and work and the influence on my research has been documented and published in detail in this journal (Cram 2016).

The reason for the specimen not being found when it clearly had a registration number may be a subject of speculation, or forever remain a mystery.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank Shirley Sorokin of the South Australian Museum for information and images of the specimen. Thanks also to Melanie Mackenzie from Museum Victoria for her assistance with this article

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Don Cram and Michael Lyons
donald.cram@bigpond.com

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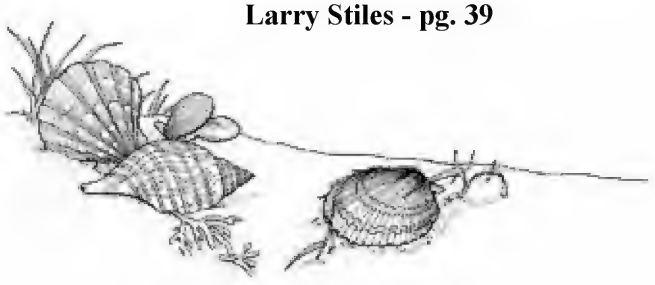
Contact Linda Powers at linda.powers1@gmail.com or at (941)-441-5973 for further information. A membership form is available at conchologistsofamerica.org

In memoriam:

Larry Stiles - pg. 39



COA *Neptunea* Award

Dear Members,

As we fight the virus by avoiding shell club meetings, shell shows, and conventions, we cannot forget those who have supported and are still supporting COA quietly and most of the time unseen or unnoticed. Last year we recognized three such members, although we did not have a convention. One of the many events on the agenda for 2021, regardless of whether or not there is a convention, will be the annual COA *Neptunea* Award(s), and it is my privilege at this time to call for nominations.

The consensus of the COA Board is to reopen nominations with a "clean slate" annually. **Nominees not selected in previous years are certainly welcome for consideration if renominated - in fact their renomination is encouraged.** For the present cycle, nominations will close on April, 15, 2021, to allow ample time for deliberation before the convention. Please note that members of the Board of Directors are not eligible to receive the *Neptuna* Award while actively serving on the Board.

By way of background, the *Neptunea* Award (Brunner, 2000; Lipe, 2000) was established at the midyear (1999-2000) meeting of the COA Board in order to recognize outstanding and distinguished service to conchologists and malacologists in recognition of:

1. Service to the Conchologists of America. AND/OR
2. Service to the scientific interests of Conchologists of America. AND/OR
3. Service to the science of Malacology as it applies to conchologists anywhere.

Although notable exceptions have been made, the COA Board, which serves as the jury for the *Neptunea* Award, has traditionally weighed its consideration for award recipients toward (1) amateurs: those not currently pursuing a principal career involving collection, study, or commerce of mollusks, (2) individuals "working behind the scenes" and relatively unrecognized in the COA world, for their contributions, and (3) active members of the COA. Up to three awards have been made at our annual conventions beginning with the Houston event in 2000 (see below). Nomination(s) for the *Neptunea* Award may be made by any COA member, and the format is simple:

Name of nominee:
This person deserves this award because (here a somewhat detailed paragraph will suffice)

..... Signed .....
and either snailmail or email that nomination to me, the COA *Neptunea* Award Coordinator:

Everett Long
422 Shoreline Drive
Swansboro, NC 28584-7204
<nlong3@earthlink.net>

Previous *Neptunea* Award recipients:

2000 (Houston, TX): Ross Gunderson, Ben & Josy Wiener, Debbie Wills
2001 (Port Canaveral, FL): Emilio Garcia, Harry Lee, Lynn Scheu
2002 (Sarasota, FL): Richard Petit, Bernard & Phyllis Pipher
2003 (Tacoma, WA) Jim and Linda Brunner, Kevin Lamprell, Doris Underwood
2004 (Tampa, FL): Bobbi Houchin
2005 (Punta Rassa, FL): Richard Forbush, Anne Joffe, William Lyons
2006 (Mobile, AL): Jack Lightbourn, Betty Lipe
2007 (Portland, OR): none given
2008 (San Antonio, TX): Bill Frank, Archie Jones
2009 (Clearwater, FL) none given
2010 (Boston, MA): none given
2011 (Port Canaveral, FL): Alan Gettleman
2012 (Cherry Hill, NJ): Gary Rosenberg, Martin Avery Snyder
2013 (Sarasota, FL): David & Lucille Green, Marlo Krisberg, Charles Rawlings
2014 (Wilmington, NC): Colin Redfern, Tom Rice
2015 (Weston, FL) John & Cheryl Jacobs; Kevan & Linda Sunderland
2016 (Chicago, IL) Rich Goldberg, Homer Rhode, Charlotte Thorpe
2017 (Key West, Fl) Robert (Bob) Janowsky
2018 (San Diego, CA) Bruce Neville
2019 (Captiva Isl, Fl) Gary Schmelz, John Timmerman
2020 (no convention) Paul Callomon, Ed Shuller & Jeannette Tysor

Brunner, L., 2000. The *Neptunea* Award. *American Conchologist* 28(3): 3. Sept.
Lipe, B[etty], 2000. Presidents Message. *American Conchologist* 28(4): 2. Dec.

In Advance, I thank you for taking time to submit your nominee for consideration.

Everett Long
Award Coordinator

The Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club announces a virtual shell show for 2021

The Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club will host an amazing FREE 2021 Virtual Sanibel Shell Show on the club's YouTube channel instead of the traditional in-person show at the Sanibel Community House. The show will be Friday March 5th, and Saturday March 6th, from 12-3pm EST.

It will be a blast, and with tons of social media exposure, it will attract a global audience. Educational and entertaining videos, a shell photo contest, DIY shell projects, door prizes, and more will be premiered on the Sanibel Shell Club's YouTube channel and made available thereafter for all to view.

Karen Silverstein, the current Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club President said, "We are excited to offer a virtual show on the same weekend as our traditional judged show. The show will further the club's purpose to educate the public and shell enthusiasts about sea life and sustaining healthy oceans. We hope all COA members will join in the fun."

The Shell Club was formed to exchange information in the fields of conchology and malacology, to foster public education and intelligent conservation, and to encourage and support studies and research activities in those fields. We are excited that, as always, all proceeds from our shell show fund research and educational grants to various institutions such as the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, Florida Gulf Coast University's Water School, University of South Florida and University of Florida students, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, and, of course, our most important COA Endowment!

The 2021 Virtual Sanibel Shell Show Committee is chaired by Clair Beckmann with cheerful support from committee members Mary Burton, Connie Jump, Joyce Matthys, Phyllis Sharp, Joe Timko, and Diane Thomas. The group has been meeting weekly for months and working on the list of invited speakers who will film their presentations in video format for the show.

Stay tuned for further updates on the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club's website *https://sanibelshellclub.com*, Facebook at *facebook.com/sanibelshellclub*, Instagram at *instagram.com/sanibelshellclub,* and in your local Shell Club newsletters.

If you have any questions, or need further information, please contact 2021 Virtual Sanibel Shell Show Chair: Clair Beckmann at 303-319-2435 or clairann2000@yahoo.com.

The loss of a wonderful longtime friend

Larry Stiles (1936-2020). The shell collecting community lost a longtime friend and fellow collector on November 14, 2020, when Larry Stiles passed away after a long battle with cancer. Many of the members in the Central Florida Shell Club and Astronaut Trail Shell Club knew and loved Larry very much the last 35 years. Larry was a personal friend to me since 1985, and it was a hard lost to absorb. He will not be forgotten, but remembered for so many wonderful times, conversations, and travels we experienced over the years.

Larry was born in Chicago. His family moved to Daytona, when he was a boy and then to Orlando, where he went to high school. After high school, Larry attended Duke University where he obtained his Bachelor Degree in History and became a teacher in Baltimore, for many years before he retired and moved to Orlando. My first meeting with Larry was at the Central Florida Shell Club Shell Show at the Science Museum in Orlando, in 1985. We became instant friends and stayed that way until his passing. Larry and I shared the same hobbies in shells, stamps, military history, cancelled naval covers from ships in the United States Navy, and military memorabilia centering around medals and decorations. He is the only person I have known that shared the exact hobbies that I have loved for years.

Larry loved seashells, especially the members of the Cypraea family. His greatest desire was to own at least one specimen of all known and recognized cowries in the world. He worked on that goal for many years and finally succeeded a couple of years before he passed away. He was rightfully very proud of his accomplishment.

Larry also loved stamps and was a very active member of the Winter Park Stamp Club in Orlando. Larry gave a number of lectures on stamps and history. He was an aggressive collector of stamps from the United States, British Commonwealth of Nations, and postal history from the Civil War and the American Great White Fleet. He had one of the very best postal history collection of United States Asiatic Fleet, prior to and during World War II, which served in China and Southeastern Asia. Many of his naval covers were one of a kind and extremely valuable to collectors. Stamps of naval history and World War II were topics we talked about on a regular basis. We arranged our schedule to meet at various stamp shows across the country to further our hobby, our friendship, and our love for history and stamps.

Larry Stiles, a familiar figure at the COA bourse, examines a scallop at the 2019 COA Captiva Island Convention. Photo courtesy of Lucy Clampit.

Larry was a longtime member of Conchologists of America (COA) and a regular on the bourse floor purchasing shells and visiting with dealers and fellow members. He was always shopping for his beloved Cypraea when he attended. The last meeting of COA he attended was at Captiva Island in 2019. It was also one of the last times I had dinner with Larry and we talked about shells, stamps, and history.

Larry never married and had no children, but he was close to several of the members in his family. Larry will be laid to rest in Chicago, next to his mother and father. Let us never forget this little man with a big heart and a love for his fellow collectors and friends. He will be missed by many.

Dave Green
dgreen2@entouch.net

Déjà vu: COA 2021 Convention, Melbourne, FL

Alan Gettleman

NASA launch of Perseverence, 30 July 2020. NASA photo.

Cape Canaveral seafood restaurants are only 45 minutes from the hotel.

Déjà vu. The COA convention committee for 2020 has reassembled for a "bigger and better" convention in June 2021. This convention will be the most difficult to plan in COA history, monitoring safety requirements real time. We will follow state COVID-19 requirements for meetings. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for such gatherings will be followed without exception.

Register for COA 2021 by using the enclosed forms or by accessing forms and additional information on the COA website. An information link to health precautions of Hilton Hotels is listed on the registration form. Updates as needed will be posted on the COA website or in future editions of the *American Conchologist*.

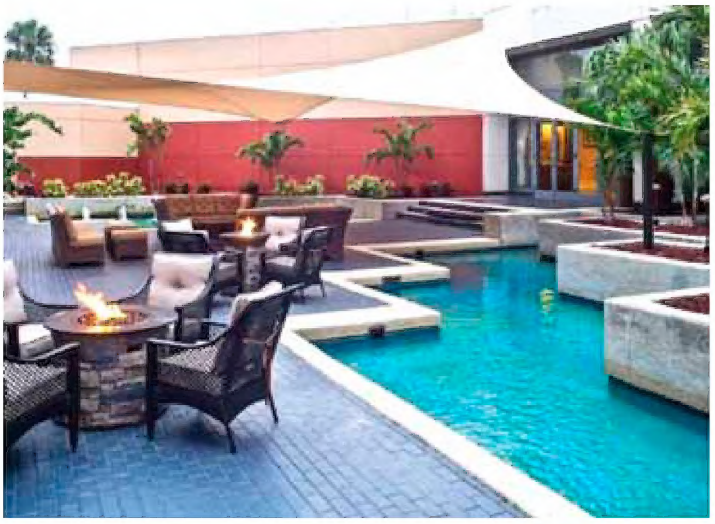
NASA has resumed launching astronauts to the International Space Station from our Space Coast. Launches of unmanned rockets are frequent and there is a good chance there will be at least an unmanned launch during convention week.

Cape Canaveral is a large cruise port and they are hopeful to resume at least some cruises by January 1, 2021. The port of Cape Canaveral is 45 minutes away with excellent seafood restaurants and Jetty Park.

The Space Coast is known for the natural history of the Indian River Lagoon, the second largest estuary on the east coast of America, and the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge has miles of unspoiled beaches and is a noted area for bird watching.

For those driving, the Melbourne area has numerous oceanside parks and most are free. The city is also on the Indian River Lagoon, with a visitors' center. For the more esoteric, Melbourne is the birth place of The Door's Jim Morrison, whose boyhood home still exists. For the more adventurous, there is an attraction where you can actually drive (but not fire) a real tank.

Many attendees will travel through Orlando, which is one of the busiest airports in the nation. Orlando



Hilton patio area – a perfect place to relax.

Hilton covered dining area – great food and views.

attractions that have reopened include: Walt Disney World, Seaworld Orlando, Universal Studio, Hosmer Museum of [Louis Comfort] Tiffany Works, Animal Kingdom, Islands of Adventure, and Universal Studios. Those flying into Orlando International Airport (MCO) please note that airport is sixty miles from the convention site and you have to arrange your own transportation to Melbourne.

Those arriving at Orlando MELBOURNE Airport (MLB), there is free hotel transportation to the convention hotel, Hilton Melbourne at 200 Rialto Place, which is a mile from that airport.

Convention Schedule At a Glance:

- Monday June 14: NASA's Kennedy Space Center, the only location on earth where astronauts launched to the moon. (All day trip). Evening: Turtle watch evening with the Sea Turtle Preservation Society (tentative).
- Tuesday June 15: Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, Vero Beach, FL, and McLarty Treasurer Museum, Sebastian FL, (all day). Evening: Turtle watch evening with the Sea Turtle Preservation Society (tentative).
- Wednesday June 16: COA Board Meeting morning. Convention opening at 1 P.M. Programs & Silent Auctions. Welcome Party, 6 P.M.
- Thursday, June 17: Programs & Silent Auctions, 9 A.M-5 P.M. Oral Auction: Preview, 6 P.M.; Auction, 7 P.M.
- Friday, June 18: Morning Programs and Silent Auction. Afternoon: Programs and COA Annual Business Meeting. Evening: Banquet, 6 P.M.
- Saturday Morning: COA Club Representatives Meeting, 9 A.M. Setup for Bourse, 8 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Bourse: 1 P.M.-8 P.M.
- Sunday: Bourse: 9 A.M.-2 P.M.

Convention Points of Contact:

CONVENTION CHAIRS: Alan Gettleman: lychee@cfl.rr.com, 321-536-2896; Phyllis Gray: 407-422-0253

TREASURER: Linda Green, 407-810-8437, lindakgreen@entouch.net

REGISTRATION: Registrar: Marsha Kirtley, 321-591-0813, MarshaK07@gmail.com, Assistant Registrar: Alan Gettleman. 321-536 2896.lychee@cfl.rr.com

BOURSE: Lynn Gaulin, 585-545-8005, shellhunter@gmail.com

LIVE AUCTION: Dave Green, 713-435-9971, dgreen2@entouch.net;

SILENT AUCTION: John & Cheryl Jacobs, 813-309-2808, johncheryl@earthlink.net

PROGRAMS: Alan Gettleman,321-536-2896, lychee@cfl.rr.com

We really need COA members and friends to donate signature specimen shells for our oral auction. We have had many donations for our silent auction and raffle items, and we thank you all, but with the disruption of postponing our convention from 2020, we have virtually NO oral auction donations.

Our oral auction is the primary fundraiser for our organization! Please contact Dave Green 713-435-9971, dgreen222@entouch.net.

_____Your hosts, the Astronaut Trail Shell Club, considers COA conventions as the Sheller's Family Reunion. Reunite with your shelling friends you have not seen for way too long at the COA convention in June 2021. Happy shelling and see you there.

CONCHOLOGISTS OF AMERICA, INC

Statement of Accounts **January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019**

Monetary Assets: December 31, 2019				
International Bank of Commerce - Accounts			$	161,631.53
Grant Endowment Accounts			$	195,625.43
PayPal Account			$	192.60
Total Account Deposits:			**$**	**357,449.56**
Convention Advances and Hotel Deposits:			$	10,500.00
Total Cash Assets:			**$**	**367,949.56**
Receipts:				
Membership Dues, *AC* Ads, *AC* Back Issues, Interest	$	16,159.14		
Donations: General Fund, Grant Endowment Fund	$	5,100.00		
COA 2019 Oral Auction Gross - CC Fees ($714.62)	$	29,490.38		
COA 2019 Convention Proceeds	$	35,367.07		
COA 2019 Convention Hotel Deposit Return	$	5,000.00		
Total Receipts:	**$**	**91,116.59**	**$**	**459,066.15**
Disbursements:				
Total *American Conchologist* Magazine:	$	16,377.59		
Academic Grant Program	$	25,900.00		
Directors and Officers Insurance	$	1,380.00		
Total Directors and Officers Expenses:	$	1,299.77		
COA Convention Printing	$	1,741.20		
Packaging & Transportation - Shell Collection Donation	$	2,767.55		
COA Award Program	$	1,176.11		
Total COA Web Site Expenses	$	1,808.50		
Bailey Matthews National Shell Museum - Archives	$	500.00		
Fees and Miscellaneous	$	269.01		
Total Disbursements:	**$**	**53,219.73**	**$**	**405,846.42**
Monetary Assets: December 31, 2019				
International Bank of Commerce - Accounts			$	172,406.44
Grant Endowment Accounts			$	194,257.73
PayPal Account			$	24,682.25
Total Account Deposits:			**$**	**391,346.42**
Convention Advances and Hotel Deposits:			$	14,500.00
Total Cash Assets:			**$**	**405,846.42**

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Coker, COA Treasurer

Note: Complete 2019 COA Board minutes will be provided in a future issue.

30
YEARS
ANNIVERSARY

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WE BUY OLD COLLECTIONS

Jose & Marcus Coltro
www.femorale.com
shells@femorale.com